MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR

NORTH FORK COQUILLE RIVER AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN (ACEC)

U. S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management

UMPQUA FIELD OFFICE COOS BAY DISTRICT - OREGON

Approved by:		
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INTRODUCTION

This document provides management guidance for the North Fork Coquille River Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in the Umpqua Field Office. All prescribed management actions are in compliance with the *Final Coos Bay District Resource Management Plan* (USDI, 1994a) and its *Record of Decision* (USDI, 1995), and the *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl*, and its' *Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (USDA; USDI, 1994b), and the *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for the Amendment to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (USDA; USDI, 2001). This plan conforms with: the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) objectives described in the Standards and Guidelines (S&Gs, pp. B-9 through B-34) of the Northwest Forest Plan; the *Port-Orford-cedar Management Guidelines* (USDI, Oct.1994c; and the *Noxious Weed Strategy for Oregon & Washington* (USDI, 1994d) and *Partners Against Weeds*, An Action Plan for the Bureau of Land Management (USDI, 1996).

The North Fork Coquille River ACEC is located in Late Successional Reserve (LSR) land use allocation and has some portion of its' acreage included in Riparian Reserves (RR). Also, it is reinstated Oregon & California (O&C) railroad land and a Tier 1 Key Watershed. Descriptions of these designations are listed below.

Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) - (designated in 1983 by citing Federal Land Policy & Management Act, 1976): "Areas within public lands where special management attention is required (when such areas are developed or used, or where no development is required) to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural, or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources, or other natural systems or processes . . . " (43 CFR 1601.0-5). To be designated an ACEC the value, resource, system, or process identified must be of "substantial significance ... this generally requires qualities of more than local significance and special worth, consequence, meaning, distinctiveness, or cause for concern" (43 CFR 1610.7-2).

Research Natural Area (RNA): The RNA designation itself is not tied to a particular law and each agency uses different laws and regulations to govern its use. BLM regulations state that for an area to be designated a RNA it must have one or more of the following characteristics:

- A typical representation of a common plant or animal association.
- An unusual plant or animal association.
- A threatened or endangered plant or animal species.
- A typical representation of common geologic, soil, or water features.
- Outstanding or unusual geologic, soil, or water features.

RNA designation is designed to prevent unnatural encroachments and activities which would directly or indirectly modify ecological processes (i.e. to preserve an area in an undisturbed state) with research

and education as the exclusive focus. Activities such as logging (including salvage) and grazing are strictly prohibited, unless it is a treatment of the natural features of interest. Physical improvements such as roads, trails, fences, and building are generally not allowed except those considered essential to proper research or educational use. Public use is generally discouraged. Maintaining trails in existence at the time of the RNA designation, depends on administrative units and determination of effects. Reasons for RNA designation are:

- Provide baseline to compare results of human activities in similar environment.
- Provide opportunities to study natural processes in undisturbed ecosystems, including plant and animal species (particularly rare and endangered species).
- Provide a gene pool preserve for plant and animal species (particularly rare and endangered species).

Late-Successional Reserve (LSR) - (designated in 1994 by the Northwest Forest Plan): LSR's "are to be managed to protect and enhance conditions of late-successional and old-growth forest ecosystems, which serve as habitat for late-successional and old-growth related species including the northern spotted owl. These reserves are designed to maintain a functional, interacting, late-successional and old-growth forest ecosystem" (ROD Standards and Guidelines, C-1 #1)

Riparian Reserves (RR)- (designated in 1994 by the Northwest Forest Plan): Riparian Reserves were developed to restore and maintain the ecological health of watersheds and aquatic ecosystems contained within them (Standards and Guides, C-30). **A** component of the riparian reserves is the Aquatic Conservation Strategy (Standards and Guides, B-9). As a general rule, standards and guides for Riparian Reserves prohibit or regulate activities in Riparian Reserves that retard or prevent attainment of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives.

Oregon and California Lands (O&C): The 1866 congressional act granting Public lands to the Oregon and California Railroad Company was revoked in 1916. These revested lands were placed under the General Land Office (GLO) with guidelines to dispose of them. The revenues from the sale of the timber and lands were to be divided among the federal government, Oregon, and the counties in which the lands were located. The results were disappointing so the Oregon and California Revested Lands Sustained Yield Management Act of August 28, 1937 was passed. This act called for implementation of a sustained yield cutting program. Lands could be used for grazing and recreation, but watersheds, wildlife, and other resources were to be protected. Receipts from sale of timber were still to be shared with the counties having O&C lands.

Key Watershed: Serve as refugia critical for maintaining and recovering habitat for at-risk stocks of anadromous salmonids and resident fish species. These refugia include areas of high quality habitat and areas of degraded habitat. Those with high quality conditions will serve as anchors for the potential recovery of depressed stocks. Those of lower quality habitat have high potential for restoration and will become future sources of high quality habitat with the implementation of a comprehensive restoration program.

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Tier 1 Watershed: Tier 1 watersheds contribute directly to conservation of at-risk anadromous salmonids, and resident fish species. They also have a high potential of being restored as part of a watershed restoration program.

ACEC - QUICK REFERENCE TABLE

NORTH FORK COQUILLE RIVER - 290 ACRES - T26S, R10W, Sec. 9, 16, & 21			
Land Classifications &	ACEC, LSR, RR, O&C, and Tier 1 - Key Watershed		
Uses			
OHV status	Limited-"designated roads only"		
Leasable Mineral	Open - (no surface occupancy)		
Entry Status			
Locatable-Salable	Closed		
Mineral Entry Status			
Oregon Natural	NA		
Heritage Ecosystem			
Cells (ONHP 1998)			
Designated Values	ACEC/LSR/RR/Tier 1-Key Watershed - Preserve, protect, or restore		
	native species composition and ecological processes of biological		
	communities.		
	Special Status Species - Critical Habitat for Northern Spotted Owls &		
	Marbled Murlletts, & for T&E and special status plants.		
	Natural System/Fish/Wildlife/Botanical - Old-growth Douglas		
	fir/hardwood riparian zone along 4 th order stream providing habitat for a		
	wide variety of riparian zone related wildlife species, and an excellent		
	spawning area for coho salmon, and used by sea run cutthroat trout and		
	steelhead trout.		

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NORTH FORK COQUILLE RIVER AREA OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

Access: Take highway 101 from Coos Bay and follow highway 42 into Coquille (12 miles). Take the Coquille Fairview highway to Fairview (9 miles). Continue straight on the Fairview Laverne Park county road 7miles, past Laverne Park (5 miles) to Moon Creek Road (26-11-33.0). Take a right, crossing the bridge, and follow Moon Creek road 6 miles, to the North Fork Ridge Road junction (27-10-6.0/26-10-30.0), and turn left. Drive 3.5 miles to the junction of the 25-10-30.0 road and turn right (this junction is just before the 608 bridge). The ACEC boundary starts about .5 miles up this road (to the head waters is about 3 miles). See attached map(s).

Acres: Approximately 290 acres.

Elevation: Approximately 600 feet to 1,700 feet, see attached map.

Land Use Allocation: Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), Late Successional Reserve (LSR), and Riparian Reserves (RR). O&C lands in a Tier 1 Key Watershed.

<u>Legal Description</u>: Sec 9, 16, and 21, T26S, R10W, Willamette Meridian.

Background: Established as an ACEC under the Coos Bay District Resource Management Plan (USDI, 1995). The minimum protective zone of 250 feet slope distance from the river was recommended to capture the total potential woody structure for the riparian system.

History of Use: This area is used for hunting and fishing recreational activities. From 1969 to 1973 the general area experienced road construction and salvage logging. Most of the woody structure was eliminated from the stream channel due to logging and stream cleaning practices. However, the remaining old riparian forest type should allow for rapid recovery. In 1979/1980 this area was examined for "Wild and Scenic River" designation, but did not meet the criteria. Opportunity exists to access a waterfall on the west bank of the stream. It is one of the highest in the district, about 250-300'

in height, and it can be seen from the 30.0 road in winter when leaves are off the trees. The flat stream bottom is extensively used by elk, particularly in the summer.

Oral history has it that an old jeep road paralleled the stream, before the present road was built, and was part of a road that followed the North Fork Coquille River down to Fairview. Supposedly some segments of that old road were planks, and it is speculated that the road was built by the CCCs for fire access. The old jeep road doesn't show on BLM's 1951 and 1956 transportation maps, but this only means there was no driveable road that BLM was aware of.

The river was rerouted to accommodate the new road that was built under a timber sale, and the new river bank was rip-rapped to protect the road. The plan was to extend the 25-10-30.0 road to tie in with the Coal Creek Mainline road (26-10-15.8), and develop a quarry in section 16. When ODFW became aware of the river relocation and the plan for connecting the roads they expressed concerns, and requested bridges to be built where the road was to cross the river. This was not feasible under the timber sale and negotiations resulted in relocating the road back away from the river. A quarry was developed in section 9 accessed by the 26-10-8.1 road, and management dropped the plan to connect the road into the Coal Creek Mainline. After building the existing road, BLM salvaged any mortality accessible from the road.

<u>Primary Values</u>: The ACEC is in a Tier 1 Key Watershed which contributes to conservation of atrisk anadromous salmonids, and resident fish species. The stream rises rapidly just above a bridge, near the main road, through a steep boulder canyon where it then flattens and broadens for three miles to the headwaters. It has deep gravel and good pool habitat giving high spawning densities of 100-500 coho spawners per mile, compared to 30 per mile on most coastal streams. It is not prime winter rearing habitat.

ODFW conducted aquatic habitat surveys in July 1997. The riparian reserves are dominated by hardwoods and some old growth conifers. Stream substrate is dominated by cobble and gravel. Large wood volume is high throughout the ACEC area. This is in part due to a restoration project implemented by the BLM in 1997. Approximately 18-20 large old growth trees were pulled over into the stream. The creek has seen an increase in pool quantity and quality, increasing the available winter/rearing habitat since project implementation.

There is high quality terrestrial riparian habitat for amphibians, small mammals, and birds (associated with riparian situations), and could be a baseline monitoring area for riparian wildlife.

Diplophyllum plicatum, a Survey and Manage category B liverwort and assessment species is documented in the area. Known sites are to be protected. Microclimate surveys were conducted on the riparian zone sites of *Diplophyllum plicatum* for soil, temperature, and moisture.

The North Coquille Watershed Analysis states the ACEC was proposed because of the following:

- Special Status species provides habitat for the northern spotted owl
- Natural System/Botanical this area is a relatively undisturbed old-growth Douglasfir/hardwood riparian zone along a fourth-order stream and one of the highest waterfalls on the district is located in the area.
- Fish/Wildlife the high quality conifer dominated riparian zone provides important habitat for a wide variety of terrestrial wildlife species. Historically, this area provided some of the best spawning habitat within the Coquille River system for native runs of coho salmon, with up to 500 spawning fish per linear mile.
- Research This area provides baseline information for comparison to impacts/benefits of projects within the watershed.

Management Objectives: (RMP pg 38)

- Retain existing RNAs and ACECs that meet the test for continued designation. Provide new special areas where needed to maintain or protect important values.
- Maintain, protect, and/or restore relevant and important values.
- Manage uses to prevent damage to the values that make the area outstanding.

Management and Use Constraints:

- A. <u>Aquatics</u>: (including candidate and T&E species) The ACEC is in a Tier 1 Key Watershed which contributes directly to the conservation of at-risk anadromous salmonids, and resident fish species which include coho salmon, sea run cutthroat trout, and steelhead trout. Fish enhancement projects may be conducted within this area. The condition of this ACEC for both fish and wildlife provides an excellent baseline for the study of riparian-associated species.
 - Habitat elements important to riparian species include down logs, snags, and boulders. Areas that lack these components due to past management practices may require restoration activities such as tree-lining or snag creation to enhance habitat values for selected species. Based on data from Johnson and O'Neil (2001) and the Coos Bay District Resource Management Plan (USDI, 1995) 16 riparian-associated amphibian species, including 7 Special Status Species, may occur within this ACEC. Other riparian species that may be present, providing that necessary habitat elements are present, include 132 species of birds, 54 species of mammals, and 13 species of reptiles.
- B. <u>Botany</u>: (including S&M and T&E species) Due to potential habitat for Survey and Manage species and Special Status species, pre-disturbance surveys are required (FSEIS, 2000) prior to habitat disturbing activities. Botanical surveys have been conducted in selected areas of the

- ACEC. *Diplophyllum plicatum*, a Survey and Manage category B liverwort and assessment species, is documented in the area and known sites are to be protected.
- C. <u>Cooperative Management opportunities</u>: Adjacent land owners will be provided a copy of the management plan and encouraged to provide additional protection.
- D. <u>Cultural Resources</u>: There are no documented cultural resource values in this ACEC. Any proposed ground disturbing activity within this area would go through standard NEPA processes, including cultural resource review and consultation with the appropriate Federally recognized Native American tribes.

E. <u>Fire Management</u>:

- 1. <u>Fire Suppression</u>: Is to be done according to the current District Fire Management Plan.
- 2. <u>Fire Use</u>: Is to be done according to the current District Fire Management Plan.
- 3. <u>Fuels Treatment</u>: Is to be done according to the current District Fire Management Plan.
- F. <u>Insects and Disease</u>: No additional control, beyond normal BLM practices, for insects or diseases will be carried out unless any infestation or infection threatens to drastically alter the natural ecological processes within the area.
- G. <u>Land Exchange/Sale/Acquisition</u>: Standard NEPA processes include BLM specialists review, and requires compliance with all appropriate plans including land classification restrictions.
- H. <u>Land Right-of-Ways/Access</u>: If no other reasonable alternative exists, BLM can not legally prohibit the public from accessing or managing their lands.
- I. <u>Minerals</u>: The area is open for mineral leasing with no surface occupancy, but closed to locatable/salable mineral.
- J. <u>Non-Native Plants and Animals</u>: (including noxious weeds) Introduction of non-native plants and animals is prohibited. Prioritize these areas to eliminate noxious weeds and non-native plants and animals.
- K. Other land Uses: Land uses not identified in this plan will be permitted only if they are compatible with the management objectives of the ACEC and Coos Bay District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (USDI, 1995). All land use proposals will be reviewed by BLM personnel with the appropriate expertise.

- L. <u>Publicity</u>: The location and resources of the ACEC will be publicized in public, official, and scientific circles.
- M. <u>Recreation</u>: (including visitor use and interpretation) Recreational activities will go through standard NEPA process and be in conformance with the RMP and this management plan.
- N. Research and Education: Observational activities are favored by BLM. Techniques will normally be of a nondestructive, non-consumptive nature. An exception to this will be the collection of voucher specimens, unless such collection might significantly reduce species population levels. Collecting will be carried out in accordance with Federal (50 CFR 17) and State (ORS 564) regulations concerning the collection of survey and manage, rare, threatened, or endangered species, and the specimens will be deposited in a public educational or scientific institution. No person shall use, occupy, construct, or maintain facilities in a manner inconsistent with the purpose of the area. Felling of trees, extensive soil excavation, and modification of any part of the forest and/or its related ecosystems for manipulative research studies is not permitted.
- O. <u>Silviculture</u>: Silviculture practices will be considered as a tool to maintain, protect, or restore relevant and important ecological system processes of the biological communities, or in cases of catastrophic damage when the damage threatens adjacent forests or public safety (see fire, and insects and disease). All actions will comply with management directions described in the Coos Bay Resource Management Plan (USDI, 1995).
- P. <u>Special Forest Products</u>: There is no known past or current use of this area. Standards and Guidelines for LSR's and Riparian Reserves apply. No additional restrictions are needed to protect the ACEC.
- Q. <u>Timber Management</u>: This area is not available for planned silviculture and timber harvest activities, or road construction. Windthrow and other damaged timber will be allowed to decay as a natural part of the ecosystem process. Exceptions may be made to maintain, protect, or restore relevant and important ecological system processes of the biological communities, or in cases of catastrophic damage when the damage threatens adjacent forests or public safety (see fire, and insects and disease). Exceptions will comply with management actions/directions as described in the Coos Bay Resource Management Plan (USDI, 1995).
- R. <u>Vehicle Use</u>: Motorized and non-motorized vehicles are limited to designated roads and trails. Except that required for emergencies or specifically authorized by BLM. Subject to valid existing rights and buried lines in rights-of-way of existing roads. Exclude rights-of-way in this area (see fire and timber management). Allocation of lands to existing rights-of-way would continue. Future rights-of-way may be granted in this area when no feasible alternative route or designated right-of-way corridor is available.

- S. <u>Visual Resource Management</u>: The ACEC and surrounding lands are classified as VRM 4, which allows moderate levels of change to the characteristic landscape. Management activities may dominate the view and be the major focus of viewer attention. Every attempt should be made to minimize the effect of management activities through careful location, minimal disturbance, and repeating the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture. However, other land status and classifications, such as ACEC and LSR, severely restrict the type of management activities that may occur. Under these situations, whichever rules are the most restrictive take precedence.
- T. <u>Wildlife Habitat</u>: (including S&M and T&E species) -

Habitat enhancement projects: Enhancement projects may be conducted provided they maintain, protect, restore relevant and important values, or preserve, protect, or restore native species composition and ecological processes of biological communities (including Oregon Natural Heritage Plan terrestrial and aquatic cells) and they comply with the appropriate regulations and plans as described below. With the exception of federally protected species, when the effects of proposed activities may conflict among species with varying habitat requirements, the needs of riparian associated species have priority.

Special Status Species (SSS) Occurrence: The Coos Bay District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (USDI, 1995) provides a list of SSS (Table C-3) that may occur on District. Some of which may inhabit the area, particularly those associated with riparian habitats, including 7 amphibian species. The area is classified as occupied habitat for marbled murrelets, contains a site center for northern spotted owls, and is designated critical habitat for both murrelets and spotted owls. Activities would require wildlife review and compliance/consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Northwest Forest Plan Survey and Manage Species (red tree voles): No red tree vole surveys have been conducted in this area. Proposed activities would comply with the ROD for Amendment to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and Other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (USDA; USDI, 2001).

Coos Bay District Resource Management Plan buffer species: The Coos Bay District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (USDI, 1995) requires protective buffers around the nests of selected species, including great blue herons and certain raptores. No nests of the listed species have been documented to date within this ACEC.

Game Species: Hunting and trapping within the ACEC is acceptable and is regulated by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Common game species include Roosevelt elk, black bear, black-tailed deer, and ruffed grouse.

Implementation Monitoring: (Appendix L - ROD)

Monitoring Questions:

- 1. Are BLM actions and BLM-authorized actions/uses near or within the special area consistent with resource management plan objectives and management direction?
- 2. What is the status of the preparation, revision and implementation of this area of critical environmental concern management plan?
- 3. Are existing BLM actions and BLM-authorized actions and uses not consistent with management direction for the area being eliminated or relocated?
- 4. Are actions being identified which are needed to maintain or restore the important values of the area? Are the actions being implemented?
- 5. Are protection buffers being provided for specific rare and locally endemic species and other species in the upland forest matrix?

Monitoring Requirements:

- 1. Annually, at least 20% of the files on all actions within and adjacent to the special area will be reviewed to determine whether the possibility of impacts on ACEC values was considered, and whether any mitigation identified as important for maintenance of ACEC values was required. If mitigation was required, the relevant actions will be reviewed on the ground, after completion, to ascertain whether they were actually implemented.
- 2. The annual Program Summary will address implementation questions 2 through 5.

Effectiveness and Validation Monitoring: (Appendix L - ROD)

Monitoring Questions:

- 1. Are the implemented management actions designed to protect the values of the special area effective?
- 2. Is the special area managed to restore or prevent the loss of outstanding values and minimize disturbance?

Monitoring Requirements:

- 1. The special area will be monitored at least every three years to determine if the values for which it was designated are being maintained.
- 2. When proactive management actions are implemented they will be monitored annually for the first three years and after that every three years, or until objectives are met, to determine if these actions met their objectives.

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